



Ancient Order of Knowledge Workers INTERNATIONAL GRAND LODGE

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Cooperative Governance and Collaboration

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REVISION HISTORY

DATE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION
03/31/2008	John Daniele	Initial writeup; Title Page, Introduction.
04/01/2008	John Daniele	Wrote chapter on Cooperative Structure (Communal Values)
04/02/2008	John Daniele	Wrote Organizational Framework section in Cooperative Struct.
04/03/2008	John Daniele	Completed chapter on Cooperative Struct. (Protocols & Practices)
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Introduction

This document represents the first formulation of the Ancient Order of Knowledge Worker's ("AOKW") philosophy on effective cooperative governance and collaboration. Affiliate Lodges of AOKW are structured such that control and governance responsibilities are shared equally amongst its membership. The goal of this document is to provide a set of guidelines that can be used to establish the core operating procedures that are necessary to manage a cooperative environment.

What must be understood is that this document does not demand strict conformance. Rather, it should serve only as a baseline from which to begin. The process of collaboration and decision making should not be devoid of creativity and imagination. As a result, the guidelines are written such that they remain open to interpretation. Therefore, lodges are encouraged to experiment with new and innovative thoughts and ideas.



Cooperative Structure

The cooperative model upon which Affiliate Lodges are based is structured in three parts as follows;

PART ONE: Communal Values

Affiliate Lodges are founded upon a set of four communal values: Free Being, Free Thinking, Genuine Contribution to the Process of Creativity, and Equal Fellowship. These values are an abstraction of our Latin motto: To Be, To Think, To Create, To Love. These values should generally serve as a guiding light for Affiliate Lodges and their members in negotiating all matters of importance or significance. A more comprehensive explanation of these values are written below:

TO BE

Being is a state of consciousness where one is emotionally unattached from any preconceived notion of the possible outcomes of an interaction. In such a state, one remains open to sharing a genuine experience with another. Therefore, to be is to acknowledge the freedom of others to choose for themselves without interference or control. When we allow ourselves to be, we enable ourselves to graciously accept whatever experience is provided to us without any restless desire for something other than what is received.

TO THINK

Thinking is the ability of the critical mind to discern. However, discernment requires keen observation that is detached from judgement. Judgement is an emotive response to the conscious mind's preoccupation with the perceptions, impressions and beliefs of the intuitive mind. Thoughts are constructs of the relationship between the emotional mind and the intuitive mind. When thoughts arise, the ability of the critical mind to discern is impeded. Therefore, thinking occurs when thoughts are quieted. The mind then enters a state of equanimity; that is to say that the mind is free from the inclination to pursue thoughts related to the subject under evaluation. Equanimity is what allows us to more effectively collaborate with others as it promotes listening without prejudice and participation without seeking to control.

TO CREATE

Creation is the outcome of applying one's will towards a specific intent. If the relationship between will and intent is severed, then nothing can be achieved. If the will applied to an intent is weak, then the outcome may be ineffective or may manifest as something other than what was intended. Therefore, collaborative efforts are only effective when one contributes with genuine and sincere intent. The vibrancy of a community is sustained through active contribution while the positive nature of a community is ensured by the purity of the intentions of its membership.

TO LOVE

To love is to perceive oneself as indistinguishable from the whole of humanity. Therefore, to love is to be in equal fellowship with humanity.



PART TWO: Organizational Framework

All structures of governance that strive for efficiency and effectiveness are divided into three core bodies that support the following functions: Administration, Decision Making and Conflict Resolution.

ADMINISTRATION

As the Ancient Order of Knowledge Workers is a society that was founded as a non-authoritarian, non-hierarchical and self-governed society, the duties pertaining to the administration of our Affiliate Lodges are equally shared amongst its members. However, this does not imply the absence of a system of roles and responsibilities. Merely that such roles and responsibilities are assigned to every member on a rotational basis. While Affiliate Lodges can decide amongst themselves what an appropriate term of service shall be, it is recommended that no one remain in any position of primary influence or control any longer than a period of three months. Additionally, everyone should learn to acquire the skills of every position, most particularly the skills of a facilitator. The *Administrative Board* of an Affiliate Lodge is comprised of two members that serve in the following roles:

Luminary:

The role of the Luminary is that of a lodge facilitator as well as a symbolical figurehead that will represent the lodge membership at committee meetings organized by the International Grand Lodge. The responsibilities of the Luminary are:

- To assemble the agenda of lodge and committee meetings and direct the Secretary to notify the membership
- To manage the activities necessary to prepare for a meeting
- To facilitate the ceremonial and social activities of a lodge meeting in addition to any committee meetings

Secretary:

The role of the Secretary is that of an administrative assistant. The responsibilities of the Secretary are:

- To assist the Luminary in the execution of his/her duties
- To serve as a primary point of contact to the lodge and report any news or information to the membership
- To maintain the lodge records (contacts, minute books, sign in books, etc.)
- To notify the membership of any scheduled lodge and committee meetings



DECISION MAKING

Undoubtedly decisions will need to be made on matters of importance or significance beyond that of simple points of administration that will impact the lodge's membership in some way shape or form. Such decisions are made by the ***Lodge Steering Committee***. However, given the cooperative nature of our lodges, the Lodge Steering Committee is comprised of all members of the lodge. The Luminary in rotation at the time that a meeting is to be held will facilitate the activities of the committee while the Secretary in rotation will assist as notetaker. The protocols that govern how such meetings are to be held in a cooperative manner are discussed in the following chapter.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

When an environment nurtures the free flow of thoughts, ideas and perspectives, inevitably opposition and conflict will arise. When such disputes arise that cannot be easily resolved, the lodge must form a ***Dispute Resolution Committee*** to mediate. If the dispute is of a personal nature, the parties to the dispute should meet with the Luminary in rotation or another well respected member of the lodge whose responsibility it will be to facilitate open, honest and cordial dialogue. The protocols and techniques employed to accomplish this are the same as those pertaining to Steering Committee meetings. However, the facilitator should not participate in such discussions with the intent of arriving at any particular objective, conclusion or compromise. Instead, the intent should simply be to facilitate true dialogue. The outcome of such meetings are solely dependent upon the will of the disputing parties.

If the dispute is of a more complex nature that is causing a significant divide amongst the fellowship of the lodge, then the Dispute Resolution Committee should be formed and facilitated by an independent third-party facilitator. A representative from the International Grand Lodge may serve as an independent facilitator, as well as any respected member of another lodge or any other person with the requisite skills, abilities and expertise to serve well in this capacity; regardless of whether they are affiliated with the Ancient Order of Knowledge Workers or not. Whatever course of action the entire fellowship of the lodge feels comfortable and confident with pursuing should be followed.



PART THREE: Protocols and Practices

Protocols and practices are the beliefs and methods we employ to transform our theoretical principles into practical forms. These practices are guided by our core values of Free Being, Free Thinking, Genuine Contribution and Equal Fellowship. In a more practical sense, these values can be understood by the following three principles:

Non-Partisanship: The essence of Free Being is independence; independence from one's own emotional attachments and independence from external influence. Therefore, partisanship is antithetical to Free Being.

Collaboration: Everyone should be provided an opportunity to participate in a process or contribute something of themselves to that process and be heard.

Merit: Actions and decisions should be made on the basis of what is the best possible answer, not personal motivation or gain.

These three principles form the foundation of the *Consensus Decision Making* process. This process ensures that:

- The process of making decisions in itself is an opportunity to learn how to listen and collaborate more effectively with others.
- Elite agendas and manipulative or coercive strategies cannot be easily imposed upon the fellowship.
- Minority ideas and opinions are given an equal opportunity for consideration
- Humans are treated with humanity, compassion and understanding.

Consensus decision making is intended to foster an environment where people feel listened to, understood and appreciated.

7-STEP PROTOCOL TOWARDS CONSENSUS

The following section provides an example set of protocols that can be used to implement a consensus style approach to decision making. These techniques can be generally applied as a strategy to deal with a myriad of other cases such as conflict resolution or negotiation.

STEP ONE: Provide participants to a meeting with ample notice so that they may have an opportunity to place an item for discussion or presentation on the agenda. This task should be managed by the facilitator and/or the notetaker.

STEP TWO: Call the meeting to order, if necessary allow participants to introduce themselves to the group in a “go-around” fashion.

STEP THREE: Solicit items to be placed upon the next meeting's agenda by those that were unable to provide a timely response to the first notice. Introduce the agenda.



STEP FOUR: The facilitator should introduce the agenda and first item for discussion or presentation. At this point, opinions are sought by every participant in a “go-around” fashion. The purpose is to provide an opportunity for everyone to share with the group their thoughts, feelings and opinions on the subject matter without commenting on anything that anyone else has said. This is not an opportunity for discussion, but rather an opportunity to listen without judgement.

STEP FIVE: The facilitator then allows the group to participate in discussion. The facilitator should use his discretion to allow whatever time is necessary to thoroughly discuss a matter without significantly compromising the agenda. If a matter is deemed by some to be of particular importance, the facilitator could call for a consensus check on whether the time allotted to agenda items should be revised. Each participant then decides to adopt one of four possible positions while the other participants remain silent about their opinion regarding someone else's decision:

Agreement

Agreement with minor reservation – such reservations should be expressed and noted

Disagreement with “*stand aside*” – the person decides to disagree but not block the decision or action; reasons should be noted

Disagreement with “*block*” - the person has decided to strongly disagree and block an action or decision; reasons should be noted

STEP SIX: Each participant makes an earnest attempt to listen carefully to and understand competing positions. The deliberation process should continue until the facilitator believes consensus has been achieved at which point, the facilitator will call another consensus check as per STEP FIVE. If circular arguments are introduced that begin to stall progress, the facilitator could then ask if someone could suggest a compromise position; repeat.

STEP SEVEN: When consensus is officially achieved, the proceedings should be documented by the notetaker and whatever process the fellowship requires to further bind the decision is followed. The facilitator will then introduce the next item on the agenda and repeat the process from STEP FOUR.

